

Heritage Farm Commission Meeting
Special Meeting Monday
February 18, 2021
1:00pm

Attendees:

Bolton Heritage Farm Commission [BHFC]: Arlene Fiano, chair; Beth Harney, vice chair; Rhea Klein, Cara Wraight

Town of Bolton: Sandy Pierog, First Selectman; Josh Kelly, Town Administrator, John Butrymovich, Facilities Director; James Rupert, Building Official et al

Consultants: Sara Nelson, Nelson Edwards Architects [NE]; Tom Elmore, Historic Landscape Architect from Elmore Design Collaborative; Patrice Carson, Consulting Director of Community Development

The Special Meeting via Zoom of the Bolton Heritage Farm Commission was called to order by chair Arlene Fiano at 1:05 PM. The meeting was turned over to Sara Nelson as presenter. Sara explained that the purpose of the meeting was to Kick Start the Master Plan Study that will examine how the buildings and grounds at the Bolton Heritage Farm are best utilized. The study is funded with a Survey and Planning Grant through the State of Connecticut Historic Preservation Office of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.

Sara began her power point presentation with a graphic of all the participants in the study, including several others besides those on the call:

- Mary Harper from Public Archaeology Survey Team [P.A.S.T] for archaeology research
- Amy Jagaczewski from GNCB for Engineering – director of their Historic Preservation efforts
- Nathan Jacobson Engineers for site utilities

Sara made introductions and asked each participant to identify their objectives for the grant. A summary of responses included:

- To coordinate any improvements at the farm with the surrounding sites including town hall and any expansions for access/ egress/ site utilities/ sanitary/ storm water and view sheds.
- To increase public use of the farm, both active and passive
- To preserve the vista from town hall to the east, and from the farm to the west
- To pursue financial sustainability which would reimburse the town for some of the cost of maintaining/ operating the arm.
- To keep the farm and its structures stabilized and moving forward
- To identify what the town can do on a staged basis to upgrade the farm

Sara next explained the project intent and study sequence, noting that the design team's goal was to create improvements to the property that would allow increased public use of the barn, the farmhouse, and the overall site. Her team will synthesize any prior work done at the farm with needs for future, more intensive uses, and create a road map for the town to follow. The work will be broken into 2 Phases:

Phase I – BHFC – review site operational costs and needs; review similar operations in other towns to refine program needs. NE will assist with this effort by helping to identify similar operations and share methodology for examining them from previous work with other clients.

Phase I – Design Team – review prior studies; overlay areas of archaeological sensitivity on civil survey; aid commission in refining program goals

Phase IA – Design Team – ground penetrating radar study to determine location of Colton farmhouse on site and metal scanning of site for historical referencing directed by P.A.S.T.

Phase II – Design Team – create a schematic master plan incorporating future uses of site and buildings including:

- historic mapping and archaeology
- code requirements for change of use to increase public access
- schematic design plan for the house and barn
- landscape design plan for the site including visual, ecological, historic and site concerns
- schematic design plan for a separate toilet building
- updated utility plan
- develop a cost framework
- recommend an implementation plan including phasing work in stages, which will be done after the plan is complete

Sara discussed other initiatives that will inform the work of the design team, including the 2014 Bolton Center Study's Land Use Vision Plan, and current planning underway in coordination with the UConn School of Architecture for an expansion of Town Hall facilities. This work was discussed in some detail and references for more information were exchanged, including siting of a new building on the Pistritto property, and site utilities to be located on the farm.

Sara then referenced the historic integrity of the farm as Camp 5 along the Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, and previous work done by P.A.S.T. for the farm's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The location of the encampment can be determined from 1781 maps developed by the French engineers, which are quite accurate to siting of stone walls and roads that exist today. This is the justification for further research into the location of the Colton farmhouse, which is not consistent on the historic maps with the location of the current house structure.

Sara then turned to Tom Elmore to discuss his process for creating a landscape plan in keeping with the historic landscapes of the farm. Tom uses historic photographs and his knowledge of local flora to determine the most appropriate plan for the farm. Several interesting points:

- Tom emphasized the importance of preserving a large tract of open space in the center of town and the view sheds and topography of the farm that creates this asset
- Using reference aerials from the US Department of Agriculture in the 20th century, Tom observed quite different tree and building patterns on the site, which will inform his design.
- Photos of previous location of the sheds that have been removed may inform the siting of the toilet building

- Photos showing the previous driveway to the carriage shed without a large parking area in front of the barn may suggest a return to that layout if parking/ egress/ support facilities areas can be developed in alternate locations.

Sara's design team at NE will focus on the buildings and their existing features to inform her recommendations. In order to preserve the character of the barn structure with its open beams and high ceilings, the interior gathering space in the barn are of limited size, approximately 42' X 45'. It is generally agreed that improvements will be limited to those that do not cover or hinder these features, such as with sheetrock or extensive utilities. The rooms at the farmhouse form two intersecting rectangles, the main house is 28' X 31', and the kitchen wing is 21' X 23'. The staircase is narrow, rooms are small and upstairs rooms are without hallways. Therefore, the farmhouse is not suited to intensive uses and currently does not meet code for residence or office uses. Further research is needed to determine where it fits into the master plan.

The Study Process will be informed by the town's need for information, such as how much definition the finance board will need about potential income generation before costs are approved. Sandy indicated that the town's most pressing concern is to learn which aspects of the farm should be prioritized under the Master Plan, and what mitigation strategies should be employed for those areas that are put on hold. The Phase I work is proposed to be completed between February and the end of April 2021, to allow P.A.S.T. to do their GPR work once the snow and frost has abated. The duration of the archaeology portion of the study is about 30 days. Phase II work, the schematic design and master planning, will be completed from May through July, with a report expected by mid-summer.

Sara indicated that this ties in nicely with the grant cycle for Historic Preservation grants, which will include another Survey and Planning grant to create contract documents for the work to be completed, and a Historic Preservation grant to pay for approved restoration work, allowing time for the town to work through its approval processes.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Harney